

Say Buerg Buerschent or Château de Bourscheid

Who wouldn't love castles? I know a lot of us still have the Disney streaks within us and I am not talking to girls only. Well, to those who think that castles and princesses are only for sissies, then, let Balmoral International Group (with a lot of male macho within this group agreeing with me) introduce you to the great Bourscheid Castle.

Standing majestically some 150 metres above the River Sûre and enclosed by circular walls with 11 watchtowers, Bourscheid Castle is located near the village of Bourscheid in north-eastern Luxembourg. The medieval castle stands on a site with archeological evidence of structures dating back to Roman times.

Although first mentioned in records from 1095, the castle appears to have been built around the year 1000 on earlier foundations. It was extended on several occasions: the outer wall dates from 1350, the Stolzembourg house from 1384 and the courtyard from 1477. Behind the gateway from the end of the 15th century, a ditch protected by four towers barred access to the upper and lower castles. The southern and eastern towers are from 1498 and the artillery bastions were built in the 16th century.

The extension of the upper part of the castle took place in the 15th century while the great fireplace and tall chimney were completed about a hundred years later. Schenk von Schmidtburg, who acquired the castle at the end of the 18th century, undertook some repair work but was unable to prevent further degradation. In the 19th century, after the chapel collapsed, there was talk of demolishing the building. However, in 1936 it became a listed site and in 1972, with the encouragement of an association called the Friends of the Castle of Bourscheid, the State acquired the building and undertook extensive repairs. As a result of restoration work, the castle is now fully accessible to visitors, but remains a predominately open-air ruin.

At first the little square near the keep, the chapel and the palace with the great hall were surrounded by a circular wall with at least 4 towers.

Work on the outer circular wall with 8 towers started shortly after the year 1350. It was finished in 1384; the same year in which the Stolzemburger House, a residential building, was erected.

As the circular wall with its 8 towers now offered better protection to the core of the castle, the great hall was built to a height of at least 10 meters, which corresponds to 4 storeys. A bakery was added on the top of a 2-level dungeon hewn into the naked rock.

Behind the gateway, which was built only after 1477, a ditch protected by 4 towers barred the access to the upper and the lower castle. The square in front of the exterior gate was protected by palisades. In this area stood the linden tree under which justice was spoken.

After 1512 Bourscheid Castle began to dilapidate when the Lord of Bourscheid had died. His heirs made 3 separate homes for themselves on the castle grounds; the Metternich family in the old palace and keep, the Zant von Merl family in the lower part of the lower castle and the Ahr family in the Stolzemburger House. Although in 1650 the chapel was enlarged, only bailiffs lived in the castle from then on. The Stolzemburger House was completely rebuilt in 1785 but then the old palace and the chapel had already partially collapsed.

The castle was abandoned in the beginning of the 19th century and fell to ruin. In 1972 the ruins of Bourscheid Castle, which had been declared a national monument in 1936, were bought by the Luxembourg State and opened to the public. Since then parts of the castle were restored.

At present the Stolzemburger House seems to be used for cultural activities and the gatekeeper's house houses a small museum which traces the history of Bourscheid Castle and the Lords of Bourscheid.

This is a nice and well known castle in Luxembourg. Although there are a lot of reviews stating that the castle is over-restored, Bourscheid Castle had also been a mute witness to history and events in the Great Duchy, a well-worth featuring in Balmoral International Group all the same.